

Nayar: Central Kerala

In all possible respects attempts seem to have been made to reduce the intensity of marital ties for the sake of the unity of taravād, village, and kingdom. Good men were men who devoted themselves first to the service of their feudal lords, and second to the welfare of their taravāds. Weak and immoral men were men who became inveigled by their wives and their children, so that they tried to make unnecessary gifts to their wives and neglected their taravāds. An ideal karanavan was one who broke off his marital ties in old age and devoted his energies solely to his sisters' children. Institutional recognition of emotional attachments between spouses was reduced to a minimum. If a man by accident died in his wife's house his body was immediately brought home for cremation by his lineage kin. After a man's death his current wives were permitted to come and view his corpse. They were then ceremonially conducted out from the north side of the house—the side opposite to that from which the god of death had come. They must not look back at the house of death and they might never visit it again. They and their children took no part in the funeral or the subsequent anniversary rites nor did they observe death pollution. [593] 361 595 613 597

In spite of the institutional precautions, undoubtedly some men formed strong emotional attachments to particular wives and their children. The institution of sorcery came into play at this point (Gough, 1958). Among Nayars, sorcery was practiced mainly against affines; it was ineffectual within the lineage. It was believed to be practiced most by junior members of a taravād against the matrilineal kin of their karanavan's wife. The reason was that if he were particularly attached to a wife, the juniors of a karanavan might fear that he would transfer to her gifts and cash which belonged legally to his taravād. They could not make their complaint in law, for the karanavan was their legal representative. Instead, they are said to have secretly engaged low-caste practitioners to recite spells and make offerings to some minor malevolent deity with the object of bringing sickness upon the wife or her kin. If they suspected such evil doing, the members of the wife's taravād might in turn hire a "good" practitioner of their own who would appeal to some other deity to return the misfortune to the senders. It is clear that Nayars did hire "good" practitioners to perform countermagic against affines; whether in fact they hired evil practitioners to perform sorcery in the first place is uncertain. At all events the institution of sorcery provided a covert outlet for interpersonal hostilities between affines which could find no expression in open conflicts between their groups as a whole. The result of the hostilities was often termination of the [54] 595 754 613 593 [586]

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particular marriage, for the spouses, unable to bear the machinations of their relatives, would often end their relationship.

I have called these Nayar institutions "marriage" because they limited and regulated sexual relationships and because they served to legitimize children. The provisions of both the tāli rite and the sambandham were directed toward these ends. The tāli rite was both a legal and a ritual institution. First, it symbolically conferred sexual and procreative powers upon the girl. The mock menstrual seclusion, the rites to the fertility goddess, and the "defloration" all indicate this. Second, it took the sexual rights in a girl away from her matrilineal kinsmen as soon as they had been conferred. This appears in that the girl and her elder matrilineal kinsmen must observe the rules of etiquette associated with incest prohibitions from the day of the tāli rite. Third, it transferred the sexual (but not the procreative) rights in the girl to a representative of her caste in the person of an enangan. Fourth, however, this man at once renounced his rights in his capacity as an individual, after which they became available to men of the caste, and of appropriate higher castes, as a group. All of this was accomplished in good time before the girl actually attained puberty and was capable of entering fruitfully into sexual liaisons. It was strictly forbidden for a man to have relations with a girl before her tāli rite, and if the rite was not performed before puberty she was expelled from caste.

With regard to the sambandham institution, sex relations were not promiscuous. They were forbidden within the lineage, within a certain range of affines (discussed below), and, most categorically, with men of lower caste. It was therefore necessary to have some procedure for legitimizing children, to show that they had been fathered by men standing in the appropriate roles. The legally obligatory payments by husbands at the time of birth accomplished this, and if no one could be found to make the payments, the woman and child were expelled from the caste.

It was appropriate that a woman should wear the tāli throughout her life and that she and her children should observe death pollution for the ritual husband rather than for any particular visiting husbands. For neither the ritual husband nor the visiting husbands had rights in the woman as individuals, nor had the woman or her children individual rights in them. After renouncing his individual rights, however, the ritual husband remained for life, in relation to this woman, the representative of his caste, which in law had collectively married her and collectively fathered her children.

Journal of American Folklore

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613 *kāranavan's* death, his adopted successor was too young to manage the property. This
782 passed temporarily into the management of a man from still another branch of the
597 same lineage. When the true claimant came of age he disputed his guardian's manage-
429 ment. After a bitter lawsuit the guardian was deposed in a British court. He continued
[578] to live on the *taravād's* land and to harass his young successor. When the guardian
[753] died, the young *kāranavan* in his anger failed to arrange for the cremation rites until
several days had passed and the corpse had decomposed. The ghost of this proxy
kāranavan has harassed his successors ever since, causing many of them to die of
diabetes. The present members regard this condition as a decomposition of the body
during life. The ghost's anger is so great that propitiations do not wholly avert its
vengeance, although special offerings temporarily delay the progress of the disease.

769 The misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts include many forms of sickness, mental
613 disorder, female barrenness and miscarriages, all of which are attributed to actual
796 bodily possession by a ghost. Financial loss, crop failure and the deaths of babies or
753 cows may also result from the ghosts' displeasure. I could find no very clear distinction
761 between the misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts and those brought about by the
789 patron goddess, by malevolent alien ghosts, or by the witchcraft or sorcery of enemies.
Indeed it is obvious that the Nāyars themselves do not clearly restrict particular
misfortunes to particular agents. For on the occasion of a misfortune, the *kāranavan*
must often consult the village astrologer (*Kanisan*) who makes calculations to discover
the responsible agent. He then instructs the *kāranavan* how to carry out its propitiation
or to accomplish its control.

796 However, my information suggests that some misfortunes may be more likely to
769 be attributed to some agents than to others. Miscarriages, for example, seem to be
[843] attributed to ancestresses, to female alien ghosts, or to the patron goddess.
[842] Barrenness is often attributed to the snake gods of the *taravād*, who are believed to
guard the fertility of its women. These misfortunes seem to be less often attributed
to male ghosts, although some instances are known. Perhaps most important, however,
circumstances immediately preceding the misfortune may help to determine the
agent. If a forebear has died recently, or if a *taravād* has failed to propitiate its lineage
ghosts or patron goddess, the *kāranavan* may not even trouble to consult the astrologer,
or the astrologer may merely corroborate his suspicions. Similarly, if a man has an
[754] enemy with whom he has recently quarreled and then himself falls ill with fever, he
is like to assume that the enemy has engaged the services of a witch or sorcerer against
him. In small villages whose population is stable, moreover, the astrologer makes it
his business to know the affairs of his clients and thus to diagnose appropriate causes
for their misfortunes.

692 *Sociological analysis.* A satisfactory analysis of the functions of lineage ghosts
must take into account those of other supernatural agents and of secular authorities.
[996] Among the Nāyars, supernatural agents have played only a minor role in punishing
[784] offences against men, as distinct from those against themselves. This is undoubtedly
because human authorities of various kinds had strong judicial functions, deriving
from their incorporation in a kingdom. In the last analysis their authority was backed
by the military power of the king or chief. Among Nāyars, civil disputes were tried
by village headman or district chief. Certain major crimes against the kingdom's
[688] religious laws were tried in the Raja's court. They included the killing of a cow or a
Brahman or fornication with lower caste persons. The killing or assault of a Nayar

Cults of the Dead Among the Nāyars

taravād may enshrine only one or two alien ghosts particularly associated with it, leaving the majority of local ghosts to be propitiated at the central village temple. a wealthy Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam builds shrines in its garden for six or eight alien ghosts and finances elaborate propitiations on their behalf. Such spirits are in Kottayam called *teyyams*. As in Cochin, the spirits are often the ghosts of Nāyar or low caste persons who died violent deaths—for example, girls who died violently before marriage, women excommunicated or executed for sexual offences, persons killed by lightning, servants executed by their masters, or warriors who died in battle. Usually, miraculous elements are interwoven into their legends. Sometimes, they become merged with common minor deities such as Vettakkorumagan, Kandhā-karanan, or some species of Bhagavadi. In a few cases, they have become associated with some episode from the puranic myths and their human origin is lost sight of. As in the village temple rites of Cochin, these ghosts in Kottayam are propitiated, on behalf of the Nāyar *taravād*, by selected persons from the lower castes. These are chiefly Vannans (washermen) and Malayans (exorcists).²² Annually, the propitiants assemble in the Nāyar courtyard and recite the myths of origin of their spirits. Later, they make and receive blood sacrifices to the spirits, and finally, while possessed by them, perform spectacular masked dances and declare the spirits' satisfaction to an assembled company of many castes. These festivals take place throughout the whole of several nights in the month of January to February and draw vast crowds from the surrounding neighborhood.²³

I have so far dealt with modes of propitiation of, and possession by, alien ghosts. In addition, both in Cochin and Kottayam, Nāyars believe that certain persons can, through appropriate rites and spells, gain private control over alien ghosts and minor deities and engage in witchcraft or sorcery through their power. In what I call witchcraft,²⁴ the individual uses the power of his patron spirit in order to take the form of a bull, dog, jackal, or other animal. In this form he touches his foe in the night, causing him to fall ill with fever, to become insane, or even to die. Witches always belong to one of the lowest castes of Parayans, Pulayans, Pānans or (in Kottayam) Malayans. They usually attack persons of Nāyar or other high caste whom they themselves hate. Occasionally, however, a normal person of any caste, even a Nāyar, may hire a witch to attack a personal enemy.

A sorcerer performs rites and recites spells to an alien ghost or minor deity over which he has control and causes it to pass magically into the body of an enemy, thus bringing about fever, miscarriages in women, insanity or death. Sorcerers can also bring about the deaths of cattle. Nāyars attribute sorcery chiefly to lower caste persons. For whereas the Nāyars predominantly worship Bhagavadi and certain Sanskrit deities, the castes below Nāyars specialize in the propitiation of evil ghosts and minor deities, and it is solely with these lower supernatural beings that witchcraft and sorcery are associated. Washermen, astrologers and umbrellamakers, who specialize in exorcising ghosts from the bodies of patients, are particularly suspected by Nāyars of themselves engaging in sorcery. Nāyars do, however, occasionally suspect Nāyars of other lineages, particularly affines with whom they have quarreled, of practicing sorcery or of hiring low caste witches or sorcerers to attack them.

Witchcraft does not usually require the diagnosis of an astrologer. A Nāyar of nervous disposition simply suspects that a low caste man has bewitched him if he falls ill after encountering an animal in the night. Sorcery is usually diagnosed by an

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Journal of American Folklore

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astrologer, who, however, normally leaves his patient to guess which of his enemies has injured him. Public accusations of witchcraft and sorcery are theoretically not permitted, although Nāyars have been known to take the law into their own hands and inflict beatings on Pānans and Parayans whom they believed to have attacked them through witchcraft. Normally, sickness resulting from possession by a ghost or demon as a result of witchcraft or sorcery is counteracted by exorcism. Local specialists of the castes of washermen, astrologers or umbrellamakers are hired to attend at the patient's house. There they make sacrifices to patron spirits whom they themselves control. Later, they voluntarily become possessed by these spirits and perform frenzied dances in hideous masks before the patient, calling upon the alien malevolent spirit to leave him. The patient usually goes into a hysterical fit, after which the sickness may subside. Exorcism by masked dancing of this kind is known as *kōlam tullal*. Any form of rites or spells to control ghosts or minor deities, whether evil or beneficent, is covered by the general term *mantravādam*.

ANALYSIS

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The analysis of beliefs and practices centering about alien ghosts involves the following questions: 1) Why are alien ghosts appropriate objects of fear? 2) How do these fears fit into the general pattern of Nāyar handling of aggression? 3) What psychic and social functions are fulfilled by the institutions surrounding alien ghosts? The answers to these questions will relate the alien ghost patterns to the functioning of the local community and its subgroups, and to the expressive needs of individuals.

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Alien ghosts as objects of fear. Alien ghosts are individuals who suffered unusual or premature death. People expect them to be especially malevolent. This expectation is based on their presumed envy of the living, and in some instances on the fact that, having found death through violence and hatred, they can be expected to continue to be violent and hateful. Hence they are appropriate targets of fear.

Alien ghosts are the focus of more violent fears and hatreds than are the ghosts of matrilineal forebears, for they can be even more capricious and wantonly punitive.

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As we have seen, Nāyars do express a limited amount of aggression against lineage ghosts, and I have suggested that this is because their aggression training is not so strict as to prevent them from acknowledging to themselves some degree of hostility toward living matrilineal elders. Their projected aggression toward lineage ghosts, however, is constrained—like their aggression toward living elders. These ghosts, although punitive, are more protective than alien ghosts.

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Alien ghosts are congenial objects for more violent aggression and fear, precisely because they are alien. They are securely outside the individual's most significant set of personal relations—those of the lineage. Even Brahmans, whose aggression training is so severe that they are unable to acknowledge hostility between themselves and their own ancestral ghosts, express fear and hatred of alien ghosts.

I assume that the fear and hostility which is directed at alien ghosts really has its source elsewhere. My reason for this assumption is that, although the fact that they died unnaturally provides a plausible reason why alien ghosts should be thought of as generally hostile, there is in most cases no ostensible reason in the individual's own personal relationships to alien ghosts which would account for their being chosen as the targets of hatred and fear. Presumably, if we follow psychoanalytic theory, the ultimate sources of these fears lie in familial relationships. This would seem reasonable

Cults of the Dead Among the Nāyars

in the Nāyar case, for in spite of the institution of lineage ghosts there are serious limitations on the expression of aggression within the matrilineage. It is therefore logical to hypothesize that a residuum of unexpressed aggression is displaced outside the lineage toward outgroups and toward supernatural agents which represent these groups. However, there are also, as we shall see, realistic reasons, issuing from the political and economic structures, why individuals should feel aggressive toward outgroups of various categories. It seems probable that the institutions surrounding alien ghosts absorb some of these aggressions as well.

Alien ghosts in the general context of Nāyar handling of aggression. The role-structure of alien ghost cults is that of the wider community, and to understand them we must see how they are interwoven with political and economic relationships between lineages and between castes. For political and economic factors limit both the form and the direction which the expression of aggression can legitimately take in these various relationships.

Within the lineage, as I have suggested, the Nāyars' aggression training permits them to acknowledge to themselves a certain degree of hostility in their relations with matrilineal kin. It does not, however, permit physical aggression between matrilineal kin, nor does it permit the expression of projected aggression in the form of accusations of witchcraft or sorcery between matrilineal kin. For the *taravād* is the smallest corporate unit in Nāyar society. Its members are bound by the closest ties of economic cooperation. They must present a united front to the world, and such forms of aggression would be incompatible with the smooth functioning of their group. A degree of aggression can, however, be safely projected outside the *taravād* on to lineage ghosts, whose cult, as we have seen, actually strengthens the solidary bonds between living matrilineal kin.

Turning to wider relationships within the Nāyar caste, we must note that the political organization traditionally permitted the open expression of organized physical aggression against peers outside the lineage, in controlled feuds between lineages of the same village, villages of the same chiefdom, and chiefdoms of the same kingdom, and in warfare between kingdoms. Such physical aggression within the caste was possible because the internal organization of the caste was segmentary. Conflicts within it therefore balanced each other. Lineages opposed each other within the village but combined against other villages. Villages opposed each other within the chiefdom but combined against other chiefdoms. Chiefdoms opposed each other within the kingdom but combined against other kingdoms in war.

In this system, the most severe limits on intersegment conflict were those on feuds within a village. Such feuds arose in response to grave disputes—often, it appears, involving charges against a Nāyar woman of immorality with a low caste man. But, particularly in Cochin, these feuds were of short duration. They were controlled and curtailed by the authority of village headman and district chief. Hence interlineage disputes were limited in their mode of expression. Moreover, it was possible for individuals of different lineages to quarrel, yet to be unable to persuade their *kāranavans* and the rest of their lineages to enter a feud with them. It is here that suspicions of sorcery came into play, chiefly through beliefs in the use of hired sorcerers who controlled alien ghosts. Affines were particularly suspect, for, outside the lineage, affines were the persons with whom one had closest relationships and with whom disputes could most easily arise. If, for example, a *kāranavan* seemed particularly fond of a

627 wife, his matrilineal juniors were believed to be especially likely to hire sorcerers to
613 harm her. For they would fear that their *kāranavan* might secretly convey to his wife
152 gifts and cash which belonged to his *taravād*. Yet without their *kāranavan*'s support
754 they would be unable to enter an open group conflict with the *taravād* of his wife.
182 The belief that affines might practice sorcery, and the existence of ritual remedies
against such attacks, therefore provided for the expression of projected aggression
against persons of other lineages within the caste. I do not know whether Nāyars did,
in fact, hire sorcerers to harm their affines, or merely suspected this of others, but it
seems very probable that they did. If so, sorcery also provided a covert mode for the
expression of direct aggression outside the lineage too. It must be noticed that although,
in the case cited, these hostilities arose as much in the conflict of interests between the
kāranavan and his matrilineal kin as between the *kāranavan*'s wife and her husband's
taravād, their institutionalized expression was not allowed to disrupt the *taravād*.
For the *kāranavan*'s matrilineal kin could not practice, and could not be suspected of
practicing, sorcery against the *kāranavan* himself. Instead, members of the *kāranavan*'s
lineage were believed to move (and probably did move) against his wife's lineage
as a group, thus endangering the solidarity of the marriage but indirectly promoting
unity within each lineage.

564 Turning to the relations between castes, it is obvious that as endogamous groups
518 of different rank, occupation and wealth, castes were in many contexts outgroups to
152 each other whose interests were opposed. As landlords and noncultivating tenants,
182 the Brahmans and Nāyars wished to exploit the lower castes for their labor; conversely,
764 the lower castes wished to obtain as much compensation as possible from the higher
castes. In these circumstances there was great realistic potential for hostility between
castes, quite apart from the fact that the internal unity of each caste probably required
the displacement of considerable additional aggression toward outgroups in other
castes. Organized physical aggression between castes was, however, not feasible.
For castes were economically and politically interdependent and linked by hereditary,
interhousehold service ties. The lower castes could not rise up against the higher
castes who employed them and held political power, and the higher castes could not
wantonly harass the lower castes on whom they depended for services. Instead, it
was in the relations between castes that the institutions of witchcraft and sorcery
were most prominent. The general tendency was for the Nāyars to accuse the lower
castes of these evils. This is understandable, for the Nāyars with their wealth and
authority had particular reason to suspect the lower castes of envy and hidden hatred.
This generalized projection of aggression toward the lower castes served to enhance
the internal unity of the Nayar caste. At the same time, the open expression of aggres-
sion against particular low caste persons was institutionally controlled. For the astrologer
did not customarily name his client's enemy, and even if the Nayar had his own sus-
picions, open accusations of witchcraft and sorcery were not permitted.

769 The lower castes were considered peculiarly appropriate propitiants for alien
564 ghosts, and only low caste people could voluntarily undergo possession by them.
787 This suggests that the Nayar fear of direct attack from an alien ghost, like the fear of
152 witchcraft and sorcery, expressed in a disguised manner the Nāyars' projected aggres-
182 sion against the lower castes. The association between lower castes and alien ghosts
[766] was, for Nāyars, indeed appropriate, for both were ritually polluting. Among Nāyars,
the corpses of persons who die violently or from epidemic are unusually polluting and

Cults of the Dead Among the Nāyars

471 769

their ghosts unusually dangerous. Instead of being burned by their matrilineal kin, the corpses of these persons are buried hastily by men of the washermen's caste—a caste particularly associated with demon propitiation and voluntary ghost possession. The spirits of these victims become alien ghosts. In their anger they may possess and cause injury to persons of any caste in their community. But only the lower castes can induce shamanistic possession by them, and it is chiefly (some say only) the lower castes who can control them to work good or ill. Appropriately, Nāyars believe that low caste witches perform additional rites connected with highly polluting objects and places in order to enhance their evil power. Witches, for example, are believed to procure a magical substance by abstracting the foetus from the body of a pregnant woman and boiling it in a cremation ground, to the accompaniment of spells to a favorite ghost or patron demon.

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There is, however, a qualitative difference between the Nāyar fear of direct attack from an alien ghost and the fear of witchcraft or sorcery. An element of morality enters into the former fear, even though alien ghosts are more wanton and capricious than lineage ghosts. Although they are malevolent and hateful, alien ghosts must, like lineage ghosts, be respected and propitiated, and there is a feeling that they have the right to be as they are. When they are associated with regular cults of the *taravād* and the village, moreover, alien ghosts can also afford some vague measure of protection from misfortune to those Nāyars who conscientiously arrange for their propitiation. It follows, therefore, that the alien ghost attached to a *taravād* or a village temple acts in some measure as a kind of conscience for the Nāyar in his relations with low caste people. For a Nāyar *taravād* which arranges grand festivals for its alien ghosts, lavishing gifts on the low caste officials who propitiate them and represent them as oracles, is also likely to be a *taravād* which has good relations with its lower caste servants in all contexts of living. In the case of the Nāyar relation to alien ghosts of his *taravād* and his village, as in the case of his relation to lineage ghosts, the concept of reprojection of the superego may therefore be appropriate, as well as that of the simple projection of aggressive id impulses. For while there seems no doubt that the Nāyar projects on to alien ghosts some of the aggression which he has toward the lower castes, just as he projects onto lineage ghosts some of the aggression he feels toward matrilineal elders, these ghosts act also as stern monitors of his conduct in relationships, respectively, with the lower castes and with matrilineal kin.

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The situation is somewhat different with regard to beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery. It is true that a Nāyar who has recently wronged an untouchable or an affine may be one most likely to suspect untouchables or affines of attacks by sorcery. But he does not—at least openly—phrase the attack in terms of justifiable retaliation for his own wrongdoing. Instead, he speaks of some anonymous affine or low caste person who, out of his own envy and wickedness, has used his evil power over a patron ghost in order to harm an innocent person. Nor does the Nāyar respond to the attacks of witches and sorcerers by humble propitiation of the possessing demon. Instead he engages a low caste practitioner of his own to exorcise the demon with the help of a superior ghostly power. Thus, while both the belief in sorcery and the public cults of alien ghosts probably reveal, indirectly, the projection of Nāyar aggression against out-groups, they operate in different social contexts. Witchcraft and sorcery are regarded, by Nāyars who are the recipients of these attacks, as the evil work of envious persons against those more successful than themselves. They are seen as covert substitutes for

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Journal of American Folklore

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forms of direct aggression which would be condemned by law. I am uncertain whether low caste people actually practice sorcery, but it seems very probable that they do. If they do, it is also very probable that they regard their actions as forms of retaliation which are morally justifiable, although outside the framework of the law. By contrast, alien ghosts institutionally attached to the *taravād* and the village have the support of all right-minded persons and are more comparable to institutionalized secular authorities. For they are concerned with the overall maintenance of interdependent and harmonious relations between castes of the community, and their cults are a public, collective acknowledgement of the need for these relationships.

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A complete analysis of alien ghost cults would, of course, require full discussion of their role in the lives of the lower castes themselves. I lack space here for such a discussion but will make one or two relevant points. In each of these lower castes there were cults of familial ghosts. These, though less elaborate than the Nāyar cult of lineage ghosts, fulfilled similar intrafamilial functions. Some lower caste households also erected one or more unhewn stones in their gardens which were believed to enshrine male or female alien ghosts or minor deities. These spirits seem to have fulfilled, for the household itself, similar functions to those of the *dharma, devī* of a Nāyar *taravād*. They were propitiated by the low caste householder. Nāyars believed that a low caste man could also control such a household spirit, or some personal spirit over which he had gained individual sway, to bring harm on an enemy through sorcery. Lower caste persons certainly believed that some members of their castes possessed these powers, and it seems probable that some persons did try to employ them. Household or personal spirits could also be used by powerful owners to exorcise other harmful spirits from the bodies of high or low caste people suffering from attacks by sorcery.

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The Nāyar's relationship to these lower castes was therefore one of secular authority combined with some ability to oppress them in the economic and political spheres. In addition, the Nāyar projected his aggression against them in the belief that they might harm him through witchcraft or sorcery. The lower caste man's relationship to the Nāyar was one of submission. He could not express direct aggression toward the Nāyar. He probably did, however, express aggression toward a Nāyar enemy covertly through sorcery. It is possible that a few low caste persons in addition believed themselves capable, through witchcraft, of assuming the form of an animal and bringing harm to an enemy of higher caste. It must also be mentioned that low caste persons believed others of their caste to be capable of sorcery against themselves. Witchcraft, however, seems to have been confined to relationships between low and high castes.

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The lower castes of the village also owed allegiance to the Nāyar goddess Bhagavadi, who was enshrined in Cochin in the village temple, and in Kottayam in small temples attached to particular *taravāds*. The lower castes could, however, approach Bhagavad, only through the propitiation of alien ghosts attached to the *taravād* or the temple. In the context of these propitiations, the lower caste officiant's relationship to his Nāyar hosts was a complex combination of aggression, authority, cooperation, and submission. In the *teyyam* festival of a Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam, for example, lower caste officiants must first humbly gain permission from the living Nāyar *kāranavani* the Nāyar lineage ghosts and the *taravād* goddess before starting their own propitiations. In the offerings to the *teyyams* which follow, the officiant's attitude to these minor deities is ostensibly one of humility, although the actual performance of the blood sacrifices permits considerable expenditure of aggression. Later, when the officiant

Cults of the Dead Among the Nāyars

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dons his mask and becomes possessed by his *teyyam*, he may adopt an authoritative or aggressive attitude to his Nāyar hosts, demanding gifts or threatening them with misfortune before conferring his blessing. He may not, of course, physically attack the Nāyars. Indeed, he is, while possessed, likely to solicit admiration by inflicting physical suffering on himself, usually by burning himself with torches or rolling in the red hot ashes of a fire. After the oracular pronouncements, having doffed his mask the officiant again becomes the servant of the *taravād* and humbly accepts his fee. For the low caste officiant, therefore, these festivals permit a limited, stylized expression of aggression and a temporary assumption of authority toward their high caste masters. At the same time, the festivals underline both the need for interdependence between the castes, and ultimately, the lower castes' permanent, secular role as submissive servants.

Functions of the cults of alien ghosts. My discussion of alien ghost institutions in the general context of Nāyar handling of aggression has necessarily pointed to some of their social and psychic functions. These may, it seems, be summarized as follows. First, the cults permitted, in a harmless manner, the handling of aggression which arose in relations between castes. Second, whether or not witchcraft or sorcery were actually practiced, the belief that those whom he wrongfully harassed could arm themselves with these ritual weapons must have acted as a deterrent to the Nāyar authority who was tempted to oppress low caste subordinates, or to favor his allies at the expense of his matrilineal juniors. Through witchcraft and sorcery, alien ghosts, therefore, might help to prevent injustices which could not readily be brought before a secular authority.

Third, these institutions brought together in ritual cooperation the very categories of persons whose mutual ambivalence provided the ultimate motive force for the institutions themselves. In the case of witchcraft and sorcery, there existed a complicated interplay of hostilities and alliances which, over time, balanced each other. All Nāyars feared the harmful supernatural power of the lower castes, and this gave unity to their caste. In a particular instance, however, a Nāyar who believed himself attacked by an individual low caste practitioner, or by another Nāyar with the help of such a practitioner, could obtain relief only by engaging the ritual assistance of some other officiant from one of the suspected castes. In the case of the cults of alien ghosts institutionally attached to his *taravād* and his village temple, it seems that the Nāyar's generalized fear of and hostility to outgroups was turned outside the area of human relations and focussed upon supernatural agents feared by all. But again, only willing and friendly ritual cooperation with lower caste officiants could ward off supernatural attacks from the whole community, including the Nāyars.

It seems probable to me that one of the most important functions of all religious ritual, if not the important, is this resolution of conflict within individuals and within groups. The manner in which this is achieved varies greatly. The rituals of rebellion and the initiation rites analyzed by Gluckman, for example, on the surface bear little resemblance to Nāyar cults of the dead. But as Gluckman has shown, their broad social functions are the same. Institutionalized religious ritual, like the private rites of obsessional neurotics, permits to the individual a disguised expression of his aggression, while at the same time reassuring him that his control over the direct physical expression of aggression is unimpaired. But institutionalized ritual does far more than this. It has not only temporary therapeutic value for the individual, but is also interwoven

The *Santāna gōpālam* yantram. As a whole, it represents Sri Krishna. The letters in it (there are 101) put together in a certain way form a mantram. It is used by barren women so that they may bear children. It may be traced on a metal plate and worn in the usual way, or on a slab of butter which is then eaten. When the latter method is adopted it is repeated on 41 successive days, during which the woman as well as the Panikkar may not have sexual connection. [789 842 834]

The *Sri Sūkra* yantram is another used by childless men and women in order to obtain offspring. The others are prophylactic against evil spirits (chiefly), to defeat enemies, to succeed in all undertakings and prevent loss of property by theft, to win over the good feeling of others, and so on. The *Sudarsana* yantram not only relieves sickness, but when drawn in 5 colours on the ground and worshipped while repeating a mantram (too long to quote) wards off the evil influence caused through black magic! Another, the *Navva* yantram, drawn in ashes of cowdung on a new cloth which is then tied round the waist, relieves a woman in labour. Yet another, the *Asvārūḍha* yantram (Asva, horse; ārūḍha, to climb) would also be useful to some people, as a person wearing it is able to cover long distances easily on horseback; and he may make the most refractory horse amenable by tying it round its neck. It will also help to cure sick cattle. In some the letters or syllables form a distinct mantram, while in others each has its own mystic meaning. [789 755 825]

Let me hasten to assure any one desirous of applying one of these charms to himself that they are entirely inoperative unless accompanied in the first place with the mystic rite which is the secret of the Panikkar.

Magic—The Evil Eye.—One day as I reached my camp in the Kōttayam taluk, North Malabar, my ears were assailed by the din of incessant drumming hard by. In the evening I was able to see and converse with the drummer, Chātu by name, aged 23, by caste Malayan. The Malayans are hereditary professional magicians, few in number, inferior in the social scale. They are not the only magicians. We have seen already (Bulletin, Volume III, No. 1, page 50) that some of the Nambūtiri Brahmans practise magic; but to the Malayan the Nayar appears as often as to any other kind of mantram-man. [754 799 564]

Chātu was delightfully communicative. He had been putting away the effects of the evil eye from one of his clientèle;—hence the din. In effect he said: certain [115]

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persons have the evil eye by nature. Potta Kannu, blind eye it is called. A person having the evil eye may, while *thinking evil*, infect man, woman or child by simply looking at them. Those who have the evil eye are generally women: men rarely. The cause is in the eye itself. No evil spirit is in any way connected with it. A woman may affect her own child. A person having the evil eye, looking at a beautiful or a healthy child, will affect it without intending to do so. The injury done through the eye is often unintentional. The power of the eye to do mischief is altogether beyond the volition of its possessor; but it is excessively virulent when mischief is really intended. Colour of the eye matters nothing. Nor is possession of the evil eye confined to any caste. He knew a Nambûtiri who had it. The effect of it on a child is that it becomes lean, feverish, loses its well-favoured appearance, and cries in its sleep. Men and women suffer from headaches and pains in the limbs. Animals are disposed to lassitude and eat little. Cows will not give milk.

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The Malayan drives away all these unpleasant ailments by invoking an evil spirit Vudikandan by name: male, having no wife. By means of magic he *forces* Vudikandan to do what he requires of him. But how? The process he would not tell. It is secret. That is, all but the drumming. No one outside the Malayan caste may be initiated into the fearsome mysteries. The spirit Vudikandan is used for no other rite. The Malayan also drives out evil spirits.

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[824]

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Châtu presented me with a mantram, a magic verse, written with a style on a cadjan leaf, the common stationery of Malabar, and told me that whenever any part of my person becomes affected by the evil eye, I should whisper the mantram over a piece of string and tie the string round my leg, or other limb or part of the body which suffers, and cure will take place instantaneously.

He works by day: never by night. A whole day is occupied in driving away injury through the evil eye in a bad case. He need not be starving; in fact has a good meal before he begins. The generous Châtu presented me also with a couple of mantrams such as would cure an easy case of harm through the evil eye, and explained their use.

[539]

(1) "Om: Namo: Bhagavatôm Sriparamêśvaranôm
Sri Pârvati yum Pallivêta Nâyatinnaî Ezhunellumpôl Sri

Pârvati kê kannêru dôsam undâi Sri Paramêsvaran Sri 755
Pârvati ute kannêru dôsem Tirtâtu pôlê Tirupôka Svâmi 539
en guruvînâna."

(I prostrate myself to Bhagavati. When Sri Paramesvaran and Sri Parvati went hunting, Sri Parvati was under the influence of the evil eye; Sri Paramêsvaran then put away this influence. I swear by my guru.)

(2) "Ôm Pêpûti Vôrûpôti Yerrikâ Swâhâ Yën Guru Vinâna."

The meaning of this is not clear. "Ôm"=I. "Yerrika"=burnt. "Swâhâ" (used as a verb)=devour. "Guru Vinâna"=by the guru or teacher. But in mantrams the word guru invariably means the deity.

Mantram (1) is whispered on sixteen grains of rice: 755
on each grain separately, not on all together. As the mantram is whispered on each grain, the grain is placed in oil. When the sixteen grains have been placed thus in the oil, it is stirred while the mantram (2) is repeated sixteen times. The magician then hands this oil in silence to the person who has been injured by the evil eye. The person receives it also in silence, and rubs it over his head. No word is spoken until he has finished.

Fear of harm from the evil eye is very general. At 754
the corner of the upper story of almost every Nâyâr house 789
near a road or path is suspended some object, often a doll-like hideous figure, on which may rest the eye of the passer by. And of course in every field some object is erected for the same purpose.

Magic such as is practised by the Malayan, or the Panikkar, is quite fair and above-board. It is, as a rule, all for good: never for harm. Nearly every misfortune, 777
bodily ill or ailment, and even death is caused by some malignant spirit or through its agency, and the warlock 753
has business everywhere relieving people from their oppression. I feel perfectly safe in saying that every 761
Nâyâr believes in magic through and through. No matter what his collegiate course has been, no matter how full of knowledge such as the West can give him, no matter how thrilled he may be by the higher Hinduism which condemns it altogether, he believes in magic as the cause of ills, and he believes in magic for removal of these. It is the last resource always, and the most powerful means in the hands of man. What are medicines, what is all our western science compared to it! The Nâyâr will not, I trust, be offended by these remarks, which after all mean nothing more than that he

754 is truly human. Belief in magic and witchcraft, symbolic
789 hurts and cures, and the like, are very deep in human nature; reason and culture do not efface it. It is one of the earliest heirlooms of the human family, and it will in all probability persist to the end. We cannot think of man as being without it.* Hence the interest in investigating it.

791 But now, as Patelin's Judge said to the draper, let us return *à nos moutons*. There is nothing secret about the profession of the Panikkar. His rites are secret of course. They are *his* secret. But his profession is an honourable one. He is not ashamed of it, nor will he deny it. That is, so long as he confines his talents to the practice of *good* magic.

754 With the professor of the more lucrative *black magic*, it is quite another thing. No one will ever admit publicly that he practises *black magic*.

Black magic.—It would never do to avoid altogether the subject of black magic, which is cultivated and practised to a much greater extent in Malabar than elsewhere in the Southern Presidency. I hope to have more to say about it later on when we come to description of some of the lower races, and for the present we must be content with a rather bare description of it. We have seen already that a few Nambūtiri Brahmans practise it. A few Nâyars also do so. But as a rule the man who really works in black magic is the Parayan.

754 The old story. It is always the man of inferior race who
564 is superior in black magic. The Parayans of Malabar are not, I think, identical with the Pariahs (Parayas) of Southern India. There are obvious differences in physique. In parts of rural Malabar one may see a Parayan's little hut far away on the hill side, but one tries in vain to see and speak to its inmates, who flee into the jungle. The Parayans are complete outcasts, and their presence carries pollution to one of any superior caste within about a furlong. It is not too much to say that, as a rule, they are abhorred as the lowest of the low. They eat beef, and are therefore quite outside the pale of Hinduism. I have heard of fairly well authenticated cases of their stealing children of Nâyars, hiding them away in the forest and

[171] * The reader who has not given much attention to the subject of Folklore, may be surprised by the evidence of the persistence of these beliefs in England, available in the publications of the Folklore Society, London. See "County Folklore," chapters on Witchcraft, etc.

bringing them up as their own. The belief that they will steal children helps to some extent to make them dreaded as well as abhorred, but it is as skilled professors of black magic that they are really feared. Ōḍi is the name of the cult, and those who follow it, Parayans as a rule, are able to do many wonderful things. The ordeals to be gone through by the apprentice in the Ōḍi cult are rather trying. Some are so utterly filthy and abominable, eating human excreta being a detail, that even amongst the Parayans, themselves dirty to a degree and accustomed to anything but a high class diet, very few are able to undergo them. Many try, and are unable to proceed. But the man who has gone through them all is a terror. He can make himself invisible, and he can turn himself at will into any animal in order to accomplish his desires. There occurs now and then the death of a woman—a Nāyar or other—enceinte for the first time, the foetus having been removed for use in black magic.*

The Parayan magician, or Ōḍiyan as he is sometimes called, being a pastmaster in Ōḍi, is credited with power to render himself invisible, using such a foetus; and even without it, he may force a woman to leave her house at midnight and meet him. There would seem to be some connection, however obscure, with hypnotism and this latter. The Parayan, who turns himself into a bullock, in such guise, circumambulates a house thrice; then, still by means of magic, he compels a certain woman of the household to come out to him. If we follow up popular belief, we find that the Nāyar woman so drawn out of her house is bound to die within three days. But as it is well in a description of this kind, to proceed by illustration when possible, I will quote an authenticated story of a woman having been compelled to leave her house by night. The "walking the dæsil" by the bullock, one of those imaginative performances difficult to account for in human belief, must be left out of the story as no one is said to have seen it.

A Nāyar noticed that, for some days, his wife, who was (contrary to the usual custom, as we have seen it to be) living in his house, appeared to be under some occult influence; and under a premonition that something was

* Not very long ago there was a case of this kind, not far from Palghat, and not only was the foetus removed but a wisp of straw was substituted in its place; apparently with an idea, that, if the space were filled up somehow, the wretched woman would not die!

- 754 going to happen he slept across the doorway, so that she could not without waking him leave the house. The door was closed and fastened, he sleeping *inside*. In the early hours of the morning he awoke, and, fearing something unpleasant had taken place as the door was open, he called his brother who was sleeping upstairs. Together they searched for the woman, and found her lying *outside* in the yard, unconscious. When she recovered her senses, she said that for some nights previous she felt as if she was being called outside, and she tried hard to resist the impulse to go out of the house into the night. At last she could resist no longer and, altogether against her will, unfastened the door and went out. What happened then she knew not. There was neither removal of a foetus nor death in this case. Such is the story. It is quite possible that stories of the kind are inculcated by wary husbands to keep the women indoors and prevent their being crowned with horns. At any rate the story is one of the kind such as every Nayar believes. It is, I may say, quite plainly to be seen that, when the Nayar constructs his house, he takes care that there are certain conveniences, so that the women need never leave the house at night. My narrator was a native gentleman in a position of authority, living at the scene of this strange story when the events related in it occurred not long ago. The persons were named, but I did not question them, as there is much objection to speak of such things to a stranger.

754 The *Ôdi* cult.—The Parayan adepts in the magic *Ôdi*
755 cult are to some extent hereditary functionaries.* They
564 form one of those hierarchies, common enough in this country, of which Europeans know so little; of which the people themselves know but little as nothing connected with them or with their system is written. It is custom pure and simple—custom which is the most difficult of all to approach and define within accuracy. We will put down what is known, in the way of popular belief of course, as may be free from error.

Those who belong to it, born into it so to speak, go through a certain novitiate, not easy; but those who wish to join it from outside the fraternity of the cult are required to *prove* themselves worthy to join it; and it is their trials as novices, terrifying and utterly filthy, which

* For much of this which follows I am indebted to Mr. U. Balakrishna Nayar, who has kindly obtained for me matter which is in a general way, unobtainable to the European.

are truly difficult. Members of the brotherhood are bound to secrecy by solemn oaths, and the secrets of their craft are not allowed lightly to pass to any outsider. A member of the brotherhood may have one or more disciples or apprentices who are in the first place bound to strict obedience. These apprentices fill vacancies in the brotherhood.

He who would be a member of the Ôḍi cult falls at the feet of him whom he would have as master, and begs for initiation into the mysteries. The master tries to dissuade him, but the would-be Ôḍiyan persists; and then, when assent is given, comes the trial. He follows his master to a lonely place by night. The master disappears in mist, and then re-appears as some terrible beast, now standing still, now rushing furiously towards the novice as if to tear him in pieces. If he stands still and unperturbed the novice is considered to have fulfilled that test. He is then required to pass the night alone in the forest, which he is made to believe is peopled with strange beings howling horribly. When he has satisfied the master that he is not afraid, he is subjected to other tests, and he is eventually accepted as a novice. He is introduced formally to the brotherhood on a certain selected day, when, having invited them to a feast, pūja is made to the dread spirit worshipped by them—Nili of Kallaḍikôḍ or Kallaḍikôḍ Nili, as she is called (Kallaḍikôḍ is the *place* name), through whose aid the Ôḍiyan works his devilment. Flesh and liquor are consumed, and the novice is taught how to procure the magical *Pilla thilum* (infant oil).

The principal ingredient to be used in preparing this is a foetus of some 6 or 7 months' growth. The Ôḍiyan fixes his eye on some woman, who may be of any caste other than his own, in her first pregnancy. Then, on a selected day, usually a Friday, he proceeds to her house at midnight, provided, that is, he meets with no inauspicious omen on the way. I am not sure what omens are auspicious or the contrary; but at any rate the Ôḍiyan returns home should he meet with an omen which is unfavourable, and starts out again some other night. Transforming himself into a dog, a bullock, a cat or some other quadruped, he walks thrice round the house, shaking vigorously a cocoanut-shell containing *gurusi*, a compound of turmeric water, lime and other substances, the colour of which is red. The woman whose appearance is desired comes out. She cannot help herself. If locked in she bangs her head against the wall, and yells

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795 until she is allowed to go out. Once out, she rushes like
564 a mad thing into the arms of the Ōḍiyan. He takes her
by the hand and leads her to the courtyard or outside it.
At once she is stripped naked. The choru kindi (blood
—vessel: the shell) being placed near it, the womb
expands, and the foetus is easily removed in a moment.
(824) A few leaves of the mailōsika plant (*Polycarpaea*
*spadicea**) are placed as was the other instrument of
magic, and the womb contracts to the normal dimen-
sions.

No wonder the Ōḍiyan is feared. By means of this
pilla thilum he may render himself invisible; in fact he is
able to do anything, according to popular belief.

SPIRITS, EVIL AND BENEFICENT, HOW SUBDUED.†

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A regular working magician tells us something more
of these. The most important of the evil spirits (Dūr
murti) are—

Karinkutti.
Kuttichchāttan (we have
met him before).
Māranakutti.
Kallāti mūttam.
Parakkutti.
Ōḍikkutti.
Kuttu bhāiravan.

Bhāiravan.
Vanni bhāiravan.
Chotāla bhadra kālī.
Dūmapati.
Narasihmamūrti.
Kāla bhāiravan.
Ōḍi bhāiravan.

Nearly every man, woman and child in Malabar
wears some protective charm against evil spirits. Such
charms are also very commonly tied round the necks of
cattle, goats and even dogs.

Here follows the recipe for subjection of the spirit
Karinkutti into one's service. Of course each spirit is
treated always in a totally different way. First you bury
a dead black or reddish buffalo. You must not catch
your buffalo and kill him. You must find him dead. If
you say this is far from easy, I can only remark that the
subjection of an evil spirit is not an easy matter. Having
buried your buffalo—assuming for the moment that you
are a magician, such as the instructions are intended for—
you bathe, and while your cloths are wet and clinging to
your body, draw the figure chakram, which corresponds to
a magic circle, on the ground over the buried buffalo. The

* I am not sure that the correct name is here given for this plant.
It may be *Alpinia Allughas*, the aromatic rhizomes of which are used by
natives medicinally.

† For this note, too, I thank Mr. Balakrishna Nāyar.

magic. Fortunately, by the kindness of Mr. U. Bala-⁷⁸⁹
krishnan Nayar, these blanks have been filled up in the ²¹²
translation which he has obtained for me—from *one who*
knows.

I will give here an excerpt from it, which is fairly ⁷⁵⁴
representative of the sympathetic side of magic such as ²¹²
is common in Malabar. It is not, I think, concerned with
sympathetic or symbolic magic exclusively, as, unless I
am much mistaken, an evil spirit is here also invoked.
It is within the domain of black magic, in which, I think,
an evil spirit is always made to help if not to work the
evil.

It describes how to cause certain pains in the body of
another. A mantram is written (here, I think, an evil
spirit is called up, though such does not appear to be
said), on the stem of the kâitha plant. The stem should
be the length of eight fingers. A figure representing the
person to be injured is (also) drawn on the stem. A hole
is bored to represent the navel. The mantram is repeated,
and at each repetition a certain thorn (kâra mollu) is fixed
into the limbs of the figure. The name of the person
and of the star under which he was born are written on
a piece of cadjan leaf, which is stuck into the hole re-
presenting the navel. The thorns are stuck in 21 times ;
that is, removed and replaced 21 times. Two magic
circles are drawn below the nipple on the figure. The
stem is then hung up in the smoke of the kitchen. A
pot of toddy and some other accessories are procured,
and with these certain rites are performed by the warlock.
When he has concluded them, he moves three steps
backwards. He shouts aloud thrice, fixing in again the
thorns, thinking all the while of the particular mischief
with which he would afflict the person to be injured.

When all this has been done, the person whose figure
has been drawn on the stem and pricked with thorns,
feels pain as if he were being pricked with thorns.

The grandha describes also how an enemy may be
stuck dumb. The head of a dark coloured fowl is cut off.
The head is then split, and a piece of cadjan on which ⁽²²⁵⁾
are written a mantram, the name of the person to be
injured, and the name of the star under which he was
born, is stuck into the split head which is then sewn up,
taking care to stitch the tongue to the beak. The head
is then inserted in a certain fruit, which, after being tied
up with a withe of a certain creeper nine spans in length,
is deposited under the enemy's gateway.

In it, too, we are told how to win over a man, or a
quarrelsome husband ; how to quiet refractory cows which

- 754 object to be milked; how to cure a headache; to prevent
 212 bad dreams, and so on.

N.B.—A mantram must be spoken, breathed, whispered with extreme accuracy. There must be no omission or false accent. Anything of the kind, or wrong pronunciation, destroys its efficacy at once.

FAMOUS MAGICIANS OF MALABAR.

791 We will close this chapter on magic which, though painfully inadequate, is already rather too long for its purpose, by mention of some of the famous workers in the art. Those who are familiar with the west coast will at once recall to mind the names of three Brâhman families whose scions are famed throughout the land as possessors of stores of magic, and at the same time—so interwoven is magic with religion!—revered for their saintliness. The eldest member of one of these is said to be "an honoured guest throughout the length and breadth of Kêrala; and on certain State occasions in Trevandrum and elsewhere, his presence is indispensable." A well-known tradition relates how that magic came, so to speak, into the family. (It is not necessary to give the family name, even though it is a household word on the west coast).

773 Long ago in the days of the Perumals, a Brâhman and
 791 his friend were belated in the Yakshi paramba (*yakshi*—
 776 female demon, *paramba*—garden) near Trichur.* The place was dreary; nothing but palms around. Suddenly they were accosted by lovely damsels who asked them to pass the night under their roof, and soon they were lodged in a sumptuous house, each in a separate chamber. But in the night, the damsels who had, *Lorelei* fashion, attracted the travellers, resumed their demoniacal forms and ate the Brâhman. His friend they could not touch as he had on his person a grandha sacred to Bhagavati; but in the morning he found himself perched on the top of a palm tree underneath which lay the bones of his friend, the Brâhman.

The Brahman's widow gave birth to a son soon after the strange death of her husband. When the boy was eleven years of age, she related to him how he had been made fatherless. He vowed vengeance on the Yakshis and Gandharvas (male demons) and, like a sensible boy, set about preparation for his life-task. It was not long before he had mastered the Vedas and all learning, and having done so he retired to the jungle, where he was

* To this day people avoid this place at night.

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791 magician was called in to prepare one of these. Placing an ordinary style and a small sheet of copper in a box, he closed it. Presently a noise was heard inside the box; and in a few moments a sound as of the style falling. The box was opened and magic figures were found to be inscribed on the copper sheet. The lady wears the talisman now! The magician must have been in a favourable mood on the occasion, as he is said to have given an additional performance on his own account. When he had placed the style and the tiny sheet of copper in the box, taking two young cocoanuts in his hands, he kept on throwing them in the air and catching them. "What will you have in each?" he asked. "Honey in one and boiled milk in the other" was the answer. Of course these were found in the cocoanuts when they were opened by the magician, but it was somewhat gross of the Nayar gentleman to test the quality of the milk by turning it into curds the next day. Wonderful stories are told of this man who used to be seen at night carried in a mancheel by invisible bearers, whose weary chant could be heard, but whose bodily presence was beyond the reach of human eye.

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791 The last and the chief of this trio is the once famous Kandeth Nayar who departed this life about a hundred years ago. Every one knows about the Kandeth Nayar, and any one now-a-days who wants to injure another invokes his aid, and resorts to his tomb to fulfil his vow. I understand that sacrifices at his tomb are common, and that his power reaches from the land of shades in almost the same strength as when he lived.

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754 The rather incoherent way in which the terms warlock, magician, have been used seems to demand some explanation. Strictly speaking, the Parayan Ōdiyan is the only warlock. Magician is scarcely the correct term for the ordinary worker in magic. Nevertheless, it is scarcely possible to avoid a somewhat indiscriminate use of these terms on account of the way in which the functions of the warlock, the magician, the astrologer, and even the priest are really interwoven one with the other. The professed magician is often also the warlock and *vice versa*. The vernacular word, which is as catholic as that which stands for "Religion," is "mantravādi"—mantram man; he who is sought every day of the year by hundreds of the people of Kerala, to relieve them of their physical troubles and infirmities, to cure their cattle, to injure their enemies, aye, even to destroy them.

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[776] spirits can be seen. At night their mouth is full of fire of different colours, but it throws out no rays. That it throws out no rays is important because therein is supposed to lie the distinction between an ordinary light and the fire in the mouth of a spirit.

The *Prêtam* is supposed to hover round its burial place or the place of its accident. Everyone is warned off such a place at night time. The hours during which these *Prêtams* appear are between 9 in the evening and 3 in the morning. It must be [754] noticed here that the *Prêtam* of a "black-magician," as distinct from a social magician like the *Kāṇiyin*, has more power to do mischief: it has more "*orenda*," so to say. The man who practises black magic invariably dies a violent death, and his *Prêtam* hovers round the scene of his former activities.

782 "Man dreads above everything else," says S. Reinach, "illness and death, 753 punishments inflicted by the angry spirits with which his imagination peoples this world." This is absolutely true with regard to the Nâyars. Disease is generally 776 believed either to be the outcome of offending a god or due to the magic performance [754] of interested relations. Preventive sacrifice is very common, and every year all respectable Nayar families perform some sort of propitiation ceremonies in the [787] village temple. If a whole village is ravaged by some epidemic, the villagers inquire into the matter through the astrologer, and if he finds, as he usually does, that it is due to the wrath of the village god or goddess, ceremonies of various kinds are at once undertaken and goats are offered as sacrifice, and sometimes a *Desavalathu*, a procession of the people with images, around the village is performed.

75 But such occurrences are rare. Only epidemics are put down to the wrath of 775 offended gods. Other diseases as well as misfortunes are put down to the influence of *Prêtams*, bribed into action by jealous or covetous relatives. When any great misfortune, such as a succession of deaths, happens in a family, the first thing that is done is to consult the astrologer, who is sure that a ghost is working it under the influence of magic. His prescription is, of course, counter-magic, to be performed by himself. An offence to a god can easily be rectified if one does some elementary sacrifices, but the performance of counter-magic is neither so inexpensive nor so [754] easy. First of all one has to get rid of the evil already done. For that elaborate ceremonies may be necessary. Secondly, ceremonies to keep one immune from future attacks are essential. If it is any woman who is possessed of the devil, and 755 it is women who generally suffer from these things, an expensive and elaborate devil dance called *Kolam Thullal* has to be performed. For this the village has to be informed, and each family in the village is supposed to contribute something in kind to the expenses and take its share in the work. The ceremony is as follows:—

Preparations for the dance must begin a good many days beforehand. The *Kāṇiyin* of the village with twelve others of his people come to the house where the

776 high above his reach unless, of course, there is something near by on which he could climb. He cannot untie a knot, as he does not possess fingers, though he can open the strongest lock. What rich people do to keep their money out of his reach is to tie a knot on the purse and keep it locked in a safe, the latter precaution being necessary against human hands that possess fingers.

776 Kutti Chattan can, of course, be tamed by magicians and bribed to do whatever
791 his patrons like. There is a story that a Brahmin landlord who was also a magician
773 tamed a Kutti Chattan and used him for the purpose of keeping a watch on his things. A Christian tenant of his who had gone to pay the rent, not knowing the existence of the invisible and mysterious detective, stole certain things and took them home with him. But lo! Kutti Chattan had followed him, and the man was found dead next morning, and the stolen things were in their place. Such is the power of Kutti Chattan, the household elf of Malabar.

771 Whether the practices here narrated and the belief in the existence of a "naughty elf" amount to religion depends very much upon the definition we give to it. Though they are distinctly social and possess social sanction, I do not think it can be called religion, because there is a fundamental difference in the emotional and psychic aspects of religious experience and practice, and such social beliefs and customs as I have described here.

754 But side by side with this there also exists "black magic," sinister, selfish, and
771 anti-social. It is fast disappearing, more as a result of economic pressure than be-
[178] cause of any growing disbelief in it. A young man has no time now to devote him-
[989] self entirely to sacrificing goats and birds all night and chanting formulae so that he might become possessed of magical power. Those young men who have devoted themselves to such practices are, however, looked upon with great fear. The community does not like such practices, and though these magicians may excite fear, they are also aware of the general belief that they will some day come to a disastrous end.

Their practices are carried on in secret and nobody knows what they do except those initiated. Their assistance is procured only by people who want to do harm to others or satisfy ignoble desires. A man often gets the help of a magician of this sort to perform his "art" so that an enemy of his who is gone on a pilgrimage may not return. They are avoided by all decent people, and society in general, though it fears their "art," considers them charlatans.

754 There are many minor superstitions that can be only briefly noticed here.

784 The Evil Eye.—The magical effect of the evil eye is a matter of very serious
123 concern among Nāyar women. I remember being taken to task for telling a woman how healthy her boy looked, and must add that I felt as if I had been convicted of a heinous crime when four or five days later I was told that the child was ill. The
[755] entire feminine opinion of the village was convinced that the child was suffering from my evil eye, and a good many mantras, or magical formulae, were said over it before the child was well again.

the child was well again. With this idea of evil eye is bound up what is known as *Kari-Nakku*, or black-tongue. When a man with *Kari-Nakku* utters anything it has effect at once. When the evil eye and *Kari-Nakku* are combined, then it has "much *orenda*" as an Angotkin would say. If your newly built house is looked upon with an evil eye and some good expression used by such a man about it, a lightning might set fire to it and destroy it the same night. If your mango tree is full of fruit this year and a man with an evil eye and *Kari-Nakku* looks at it and says "how fortunate," it might happen that for years to come it would bear no more fruit. If an envious woman, aroused by the green-eyed monster of jealousy, remarks how pretty a girl is, her hair might begin to fall off, her colour might fade, her cheeks might lose their bloom.

The fact to notice with regard to this is that you have to say complimentary things to effect evil. If you said how ugly a pretty girl is it would not affect her. You must say, out of your heart, how beautiful she is and then it might have effect. Everything is supposed to depend on whether it is said with or without design. If anything is said with design there would be no effect. Only when such exclamation comes out of the heart has it the power to do evil.

Koti.—Another evil-working power is *Koti*. The word literally means desire, but as an evil force it works only when a hungry person sees a rich and healthy fellow eating a good meal. If a poor man sees you eat, and his mouth waters at the delicacies before you, you are sure to suffer from his *Koti*, you will get stomach-ache and even dysentery. It is the particular look of the hungry man that has the evil effect. When once a man begins to suffer from another's *Koti* the only way to get over it is to eat some salt over which some *mantrams*, or magical formulae, have been repeated.

The tabus which are prevalent among the Nāyars are too many to be described in detail here. A few examples will show how, even in the most important matters, life is regulated in primitive society. The reason for such prohibitions, as M. Reinach points out, is to live at peace with the spirits that are supposed to surround you.

You are prohibited from eating your food at dusk. It is supposed to be an awful sin, because everything is considered to be in "a state of suspended animation" in the very short period which marks the transition from a hot tropical day to a cool and breezy night. You cannot do anything at that time except bathe or pray. There are tabus on what you may do on particular days of the week :

"*Ezatcha Kulichalam*
Vyatcha Kulikharatu."

This is a typical example of the Nāyar tabu. Its meaning is this: "Even if you have an oilbath on the seven days of the week, don't do it on a Thursday." Though there is no reason assigned for such a prohibition, there is a sufficiency of

belief in animism, and all these are largely mixed up with the religion of the Nayars. Animism refers to the belief that man passes through life surrounded by a ghastly company of powers, elements, and tendencies, impersonal in character, mere shapeless phantoms of which no image can be made and no idea can be formed. Most of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own—one presides over cholera, another over small-pox, yet another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, and others again haunt rivers, whirlpools and waterfalls. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ills and calamities which they bring about, and the essence of these practices is magic. 564
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Evidence of a wide-spread belief in the worship of ancestors is to be seen in the *kistavens* (*thoppi kallū*)—the rock caves containing the sepulchral urns found in the jungles and other parts of the State—in the ceremonies performed and the offerings made for the spirits of the dead. They are worshipped even now in special *kūvūs*, sometimes even in small out-houses or special rooms in the house on new moon days or *Sankrāntis*, and there are also periodical commemorations on the anniversaries of the ancestor's death. Dead ancestors are also represented by stones or small images of gold or silver kept in the middle room of the Nayar houses, and offerings of food and drink are made to them on new moon and *Sankrānti* nights. Animistic again is the worship of Kāli or Bhagavati who presides over small-pox, cholera, and the thousand maladies that flesh is heir to, the worship of animals and plants and lastly the belief in exorcism and witchcraft in which Brahmans also share. 769
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Serpent shrines (*Nūgattūn kūvūs* or *Nagakōttas*) are to be found in the compounds of every Nayar house in the Cochin State, and their worship occupies a prominent place in the religious life of the Nayars and other castes. The following mythical origin is ascribed to the adoration of serpents in the Keralaḷpathi. 771
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The first Aryan colonists settled by Parasurama found Kerala absolutely uninhabitable, and finding it impossible to improve their condition, returned to their old country. After their departure, the Nāgas (or serpent gods) of the lower world or *Pāthdīa* took possession of the partly reclaimed land and settled 773
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105 also have to be paid for, if they do not wish to be summarily evicted by
427 a land owner who simply tolerates their settling down on his land. This is an ordinary lease, like a *verumpattam*, but is called a *kudiyiruppu*.

Tenants were formerly at a great disadvantage vis a vis the *janmi*, as the latter was at liberty to evict them on the slightest pretext. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930, by protecting the tenant, and restricting the cases in which eviction is possible (such as the non-payment of rent for instance, or necessity for the land owner to have some land to cultivate himself), especially of the *kanamdar*, has made this a thing of the past. Dissatisfaction with the existing conditions of land ownership and land-tenure continues, however, and the present tendency goes so far as [423] to want to protect the interests of the *verumpattam* tenants to the detriment [464] of the *kanamdars* and *janmis* and even, in the last resort as we shall see, of the landless, agrarian labourers who constitute the vast army of the Kerala agrarian proletariat.

105 It is difficult to generalize about the distribution of agricultural roles
423 and interests among the various castes and communities in the state.
564 Schematically, it can be said, however, that generally Nambudri Brahmins are *janmis*, since, as mythology has it, Parasu Raman gave them the land in perpetual enjoyment. Commenting on this, one of my interpreters assured me that this was not mere idle belief. It was a fact, giving the Brahmins an unequivocal title to the land, in spite of there being "no legal document" confirming them in their ownership. Many Nayars, including Kshattriyas such as the rajas of Cochin and Travancore, Samantans such as the Zamorin, and some Tiyas and Moplas, are also owners of large tracts of land.

105 *Kanamdars* are usually recruited among the well-to-do Nayars and
564 Tiyas, but also among the big Mopla families. Other Moslems are
429 *verumpattam* tenants, as are the majority of the Tiyas. These of course
493 used to follow their traditional profession of *toddy* (fermented palm
463 juice) tapping, but with the introduction of prohibition in the former
464 Madras State, they have had to give it up, and mainly hire themselves out as labourers. Others who have always hired themselves out in this way, as an immemorial caste occupation, are the Cherumas and Pulayas, some free, but the vast majority tied to the land. Many Moplas, also, have no other means of subsistence.

105 The aboriginals in Kerala continue their wild life of beggars, food-
563 gatherers or primitive forest-clearers and agriculturalists. Some are ad-
463 dicted to witchcraft as are also members of some of the artisan castes,
454 and their activities give Kerala a strange, mysterious atmosphere of im-
ponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries.

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NĀYAR 623

the present day, a sumptuous feast at the cost of each villager in rotation, and partaken of by all assembled, and a small offering to the temple, are all that remains to commemorate it. Astrology is believed in, and some of its votaries are spoken of as Trikalagnas, or those who know the past, present, and future. It is due to a curse of Siva on the science of his son, who made bold by its means to predict even the future of his father, that occasional mistakes are said to occur in astrological calculations. Sorcery and witchcraft are believed to be potent powers for evil. To make a person imbecile, to paralyse his limbs, to cause him to lavish all his wealth upon another, to make him deaf and dumb, and, if need be, even to make an end of him, are not supposed to be beyond the powers of the ordinary wizard. Next to wizardry and astrology, palmistry, omens, and the lizard science are generally believed in. In the category of good omens are placed the elephant, a pot full of water, sweetmeats, fruit, fish and flesh, images of gods, kings, a cow with its calf, married women, tied bullocks, gold lamps, ghce, milk, and so on. Under the head of bad omens come the donkey, a broom, buffalo, untied bullock, barber, widow, patient, cat, washerman, etc. The worst of all omens is beyond question to allow a cat to cross one's path. An odd number of Nāyars, and an even number of Brāhmans, are good omens, the reverse being particularly bad. On the Vinayaka-chaturthi day in the month of Avani, no man is permitted to look at the rising moon under penalty of incurring unmerited obloquy.

"The chief religious festival of the Nāyars is Ōnam, which takes place in the last week of August, or first week of September. It is a time of rejoicing and merriment. Father Paulinus, writing in the latter half of the